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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [HR](#)
SUBJECT: SIX-MONTH DELAY OF JUDICIARY SCREENING
FOR TECHNICAL, NOT POLITICAL, REASONS

11. (SBU) EC representatives confirmed 28 February that "screening" of Croatian legislation and practice in preparation for adopting the Acquis chapters dealing with human rights and the judiciary would be postponed for six months to September 2006. Local press put an inflammatory spin on the news, asserting that the delay was a warning to the GOC. Opposition leader Ivica Racan, chair of the parliamentary committee for monitoring EU membership negotiations, saw a chance to score some political points and added to the rhetoric by claiming that the reason for postponement is the heavy backlog of unsolved cases burdening the courts and the "high level of corruption" in the judiciary. GOC and EC officials all denied any political or admonitory message in rescheduling these two chapters, insisting the delay is technical and pointing out that screening for other chapters will proceed in their place.

12. (SBU) The head of the EC mission confirmed to Ambassador March 1 that there was no political reason for the delay and advised about an additional bureaucratic reason: he did not want public release of the results of the screening to coincide with publication of the EC's end-of-year report on overall progress.

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